

MASSACHUSETTS RARE AND ENDANGERED PLANTS

NORTHERN MOUNTAIN-ASH

(Sorbus decora (Sarg.) Schneider)

DESCRIPTION

Northern Mountain-ash may be either a tall shrub or a small tree which grows up to 10 m. tall and has long pinnately compound leaves. Leaflets are sharply serrate, narrowly oblong, and end in a short sharp point; they are 4-7 cm long, dark blue-green above and pale underneath. Small, white, five petalled flowers (1 cm wide) are in broad flat topped clusters with the inflorescence 6-15 cm wide. Flowering occurs from late May through June. The fruits are bright reddish-orange, 8-10 mm wide, and arranged in clusters appearing in August in Massachusetts.

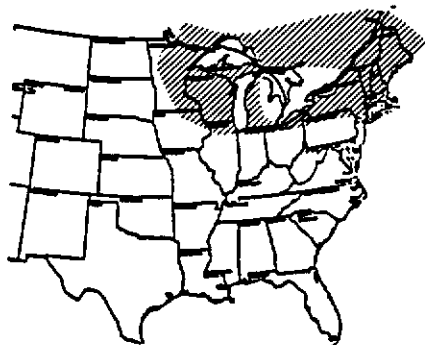


Soper, James H. and Margaret L.
Heimburger. Shrubs of Ontario,
Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

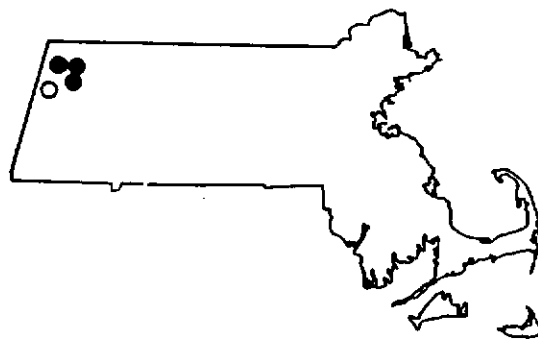
SIMILAR SPECIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

American Mountain-ash (Sorbus americana) closely resembles Northern Mountain-ash and is fairly widespread on Massachusetts rocky summits. S. americana differs from decora by its medium green leaflets which are relatively longer, narrower, and much more sharply pointed. The fruits of S. americana are noticeably smaller (4-6 mm) and the flowering period is about 2 weeks later than S. decora. Finally, S. decora has a more rounded overall shape than S. americana.

(continued overleaf)



Distribution of Sorbus decora



● Verified since 1978
○ Reported prior to 1978

Breeding Distribution in Massachusetts
by Town

HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS

Northern Mountain-ash grows on slopes in moist or dry rocky soils. In Massachusetts it is found at higher elevations occurring in thickets, open summits, and clearings in woods. It grows with Sorbus americana (American Mountain-ash), Viburnum alnifolium (Hobblebush), Abies balsamea (Balsam Fir), Acer spicatum (Mountain Maple), Deschampsia (Hairgrass), Prunus virginiana (Choke Cherry), and Betula alleghaniensis (Yellow Birch).

RANGE

Northern Mountain-ash is distributed from Newfoundland west to Minnesota and south to Massachusetts, New York, northern Indiana and Iowa.

POPULATION STATUS

This species is considered "Endangered" in Massachusetts. Currently (1978 to present) three locations have been verified; two other historical sites have not been reverified. Current populations are of scattered individuals and are vulnerable to recreational development. The species is at the southern limit of its range in Massachusetts, which in part accounts for its rarity here.